TRIALS:

Curtains for the D.A.

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"The only way they can stop me from pushing the Clay Shaw case to trial is to kill me, because we are going to trial. The moment of truth has arrived." So vowed New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison last month in finally announcing the date—after long legal delays—for the trial of the man he has accused of masterminding the murder of John F. Kennedy.

The trial of Clay Shaw was to have begun this week, but the moment of truth evidently is not yet at hand—and may never come. A cornerstone of Garrison's bizarre case was the contention that someone shot at President Kennedy from the front as well as from behind. To support this conspiracy charge, the D.A. had asked a Washington court to order the U.S. Archives to release autopsy photographs and X-rays of the dead President that have thus far been kept from public view at the specific request of the Kennedy family. Then, late last week, the Justice Department suddenly released a report prepared by four eminent physicians who had been permitted to examine the photographs and X-rays. Their conclusion: "President Kennedy was struck by two bullets fired from above and behind him."

A Federal judge thereupon ruled that Garrison would have to produce evidence that Kennedy was fired at from two directions in order to obtain release of the Archives material. That, in turn, brought a strategic retreat from the tall D.A. "In the event the Federal government does not honor our subpoenas and blocks our attempt to present all of the evidence," said a press release from Garrison's office, "this case *cannot* be brought to trial." And on that note he asked for an indefinite continuance of the Clay Shaw case. The trial judge in New Orleans still must decide whether to accept Garrison's latest request, but there seemed every indication that Big Jim's headline-hunting sideshow at long last was about to close down.